

The American Presidency After Two Years of President Biden: The Reasons of a Mid-Term Assessment

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Providing a thoughtful assessment of an American Presidency after only two years may appear a complicated effort, especially since approximately 40% of US Presidents have won re-election after their first term. Yet, the Biden Presidency has started in extraordinary times, both from an internal and an external point of view. Moreover, the changes in the make-up of Congress following the mid-term elections, which have granted the Republicans a majority in the House but have surprisingly flipped the control of the Senate deadlock in favour of Democrats, are likely to mark a significant shift in the pursuance of the incumbent administration's policies. Some of the preliminary considerations that are put up for discussion in this special issue might be challenged by future and unforeseeable developments, included the outcome of the 2024 Presidential contest, that looks more and more likely to oppose again the incumbent President and the former President Donald Trump. That notwithstanding, these two years have provided plenty of room for discussion of the Biden administration's policies, that will be assessed in detail in the articles of this special issue.

On the one hand, the Biden Presidency has been turbulent since even before its beginning, in light of the controversy over election frauds and the unwillingness of the outgoing President Trump to cooperate to an ordinary transition of powers. This has culminated in the events of January 6th, 2021, that have forced most of the reluctant members of the Republican Congressional delegation to acknowledge that Biden was the legitimate President. These unprecedented circumstances have affected the priorities of Congress, which has long debated about the establishment of an *ad hoc* investigative committee and about the most suitable ways to prevent any form of election subversion. The incoming administration has been forced to hit the ground running, since the Covid-19 pandemic was still widespread all over the nation and the vaccination rate was still insufficient to halt the spread of the disease. The decision to allocate considerable resources to remedy the effects of the pandemic both in terms of health care assistance and subsidies to a suffering economy has been one of the most relevant accomplishments of the Biden administration, which has laid down an ambitious plan of infrastructure investment echoing the campaign's motto "Build Back Better". However, disagreements with several Republican-led State legislatures and with Republican governors has hindered the possibility of this administration to actually deliver

meaningful results in some of the policy areas that it intended to tackle. For example, Biden's bold attempt to curtail the control of Big Techs over free speech has not proved conclusive, while the DOJ's efforts to advance an innovative abolitionist stance on capital punishment may eventually bring about long-awaited shifts in the US criminal justice system. In addition, the Biden Presidency has witnessed some of the effects of what is arguably the most significant legacy of the Trump Presidency, *i.e.* the consolidation of a conservative supermajority on the Supreme Court, which has handed down paramount decisions with reference to reproductive rights, gun control and environmental protection. The institutional arrangement of the Court has been the object of a lively discussion that, however, has not brought about any tangible outcome this far.

On the other hand, the first two years of this Presidency deserve careful scrutiny for what has occurred on the international stage and for the determination of the future role of the United States of America in the global scenario. Whilst indeed the Biden Presidency has met some of the expectations that the US were willing to nurture the multilateral system of international relations that has existed above all after the end of the Cold War and the foundation of the WTO, especially for what concerns the commitment to environmental and climate change policies, there has been little to no discontinuity from the Trump's approach for what concerns Biden's stance with reference to trade relations. Biden's legacy will also be undoubtedly influenced by the controversial withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, which has soon been followed by the Russian attack over Ukrainian territory, that has seen the US at the forefront of the NATO commitment to deliver military supplies to Ukraine, though without a direct involvement of US military personnel on the ground for the time being.

All the above considerations appear convenient to publish a timely and insightful special issue of our journal, discussing the present and future developments of the US Presidency and of the American constitutional system in times of extreme political and ideological polarization and in light of an ever-changing scenario in international relations and politics.